



PFLAG Edmonton

April 1996

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, April 16, 1996

7:30 pm

10112 - 124 St

Lower Level

Parking is available behind
Boystown Cafe

For further information please call
Cindy [REDACTED] or Lynn [REDACTED]
or [REDACTED] VB3524.

Coffee will be served. Everyone
welcome - lesbian, gay, bisexual,
transgender, and/or their parents.

PFLAG SUPPORT

- "PINK TANK"

The second annual "Pink Tank" took place March 2, '96 with over 25 les/bi/gay groups participating. PFLAG Edmonton was represented by Cindy and Lynne. Lynne's report follows:

Cindy and I attended the *Pink Tank* function this year and although I only took in the afternoon session, I found it most enlightening. The facilitator did a fabulous job - kept things light and fun and also made sure we stuck to the schedule prepared ahead of time. A lot of great questions were brought up and many issues dealing with the community and raising public awareness were dealt with. It was

hoped by those present, that the issues at hand would be taken care of over the year instead of not



being followed through with as has happened in previous years. Personally, I am hoping a resource list will become available, so we will know who is in the community and what service they provide and also, how to reach them. It would be very helpful for me, since I have the phone line to offer support and I don't always get questions pertaining to the support group alone. I did not take detailed notes, but all in all, I found it very informative and next year, I wouldn't mind attending the full session which ran from 10 am to 4 pm.

-TOWN HALL MEETING

On February 29, '96 I attended a *Town Hall Meeting* in which Edmonton Police Chief Lindsey and three of his staff members met with about 30 members of the les/bi/gay community and their supporters. Jenny, Terry and Ellen represented PFLAG Edmonton. Two of the police officers, one a man and one a woman, were members of the Edmonton Police Liaison Committee. Opportunities for the support and fair treatment of the gay community by Edmonton police officers were discussed.

A number of decisions/ suggestions were made:

- Those Edmonton police officers who work in schools will encourage their school staffs to put up PFLAG posters of lesbian and gay students in school libraries, counsellors rooms and regular classrooms;
- Lesbian and gay people were encouraged by Chief Lindsey to become much more aggressive in reporting incidents of gay-bashing to the police - if in doubt, report!
- The possibility of producing a police poster similar to the one distributed by the Ottawa police which says, "Being gay is not a crime - Gay-bashing is!", was discussed. A graphic artist who was present offered his services

free of charge. These posters would be displayed in schools, shopping centers and other public places;

- New police officers will receive sensitivity training for homophobia. It was suggested that all officers receive this training if funding becomes available;
- Entrapment by police officers will be discontinued.

(At this meeting Chief Lindsey discovered, contrary to his previous knowledge, that he does indeed have both lesbian and gay police officers on his force.)

-PFLAG "FATHERS"

Hello. I am a researcher on CBC's Man Alive. Man Alive is a half-hour documentary series aired weekly on the CBC. It has been on the air for almost thirty years and has won countless awards. It deals with spiritual, moral and ethical issues of the day - the human journey! I am presently researching a story on fathers with gay sons. I would be very interested in speaking with fathers about how they felt when their son came out to them.

What has been the impact on your relationship with each other?

Since we focus on Canadian stories I ask that only fathers living within Canada respond. I can be reached by e-mail or phoned collect at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] weekdays between 9am - 5pm (EST). Email address is [REDACTED]

PFLAG EDUCATION

PFLAG Edmonton has added the following new books to their library:

- *The Best Little Boy in the World* by John Reid;
- *Jim* by June Callwood;
- *Afterlife* by Paul Monette;
- *In the Courts of the Lord* by James Ferry;
- *Coming Out to Parents* by Mary V. Borhek;
- *Becoming a Man* by Paul Monette.

Please contact Elsie at a meeting if you would like to borrow one of these books.

Unfortunately we will be losing Elsie and Bob to the beautiful Okanogan Valley in May. Anyone willing to look after the library books please contact Elsie or Cindy.

A number of our library books have been out on loan for more than two months. Please return these books to Elsie in April. Thank you!



Book Reviews

- **Stranger at the Gate** - This is an autobiographical novel of Mel White. Raised in a fundamentalist religious atmosphere, Mel White looks at his own life struggles in attempting to overcome his homosexuality in the context of the *Religious Right*. It is a deeply personal story of

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torment and triumph as well as a frightening examination of the anti-homosexual tactics of the *Religious Right* in America. This is a deeply spiritual story of a gay Christian American determined to tell the truth. Mel White is presently Dean of Dallas's Cathedral of Hope, the largest gay church in the world.

Elsie

- **"Is It a Choice?"** - by Eric Marcus. I found this book to be very informative and knowledgeable. The contents were very well written and there are lots of questions and lots of stories that help support a point. The contents range from Self Discovery to Religion (a very good chapter) to Aids and Aging. I found out there is really no such thing as a "stupid question" and I would recommend this book to parents who are just coming to terms with their children's sexuality. On a scale of 1 to 10, it gets a definite 10!

Lynne

PFLAG ADVOCACY

The following article, reprinted from The Edmonton Journal, March 13, '96, written by a lecturer in ethics and international politics at the University of Alberta, Canada, succinctly expresses the position of PFLAG Edmonton on the "Delwin Vriend case".

Law Should Uphold Civil rights, Not Mimic Religious Dogma

by Malinda S. Smith

Our society is hostile to civil rights. This is clear in the Alberta Appeal Court ruling on the Vriend case. It is evident in the Klein government's efforts to destroy the

human rights commission.

Compulsory heterosexuality compels most gays to stay closeted. If gays "come out," they are accused of flaunting their sexuality. This is a repressive condition.

Vriend was fired not because of professional incompetence, or inappropriate conduct in the classroom. He was fired because he is gay. McClung's ruling validated sexuality as a job description. Gay employers might test McClung's thesis of the law's indifference to sexuality by firing all heterosexual employees.

Vriend's case proves that it is not experience nor knowledge which shape opinions about gays. Rather, opinions are based on stereotypes, divorced from reality. One stereotype is that lesbians are women who hate men (e.g. "bulldyke" or "diesel dyke") and that gay men are effeminate (e.g. "fags", "fairies"). Based on stereotypes, gays and lesbians become the object of homophobic jokes. They are maliciously targeted for "queerbashing" and even murdered.

A second stereotype, primarily of gay men, accuses them of pedophilia. McClung dismissed homosexuality as sexual deviancy. Linda Goyette wrote Feb. 27 that McClung's decision was unduly fixated on sexual acts like sodomy. Most outrageous, McClung invoked the cases of Dahmer, Olsen and Bernardo to suggest protecting gays would lead to sanctioning rapists and mass murderers.

Pedophilia is wrong. It is the abuse of power between an adult and a child. It violates a sacred trust whether the adult is a homosexual or heterosexual. There is no evidence to suggest in Alberta or

elsewhere that gays are more likely than heterosexuals to engage in pedophilia. Studies on child victims of sex crimes by Nicholas Grath, and sexual abuse of boys by Mary Spencer, reveal that the largest class of abusers are male family members.



Evocations of pedophilia and sexual deviancy are red herrings. They divert attention from a fundamental fact: the Vriend case was about employment, not sex.

McClung failed to remedy employment discrimination because he acted as a priest. The decision elevated to the authoritative status of law uninformed stereotypes about gays. McClung did exactly what he said a judge should not do; he legislated morality.

A third and related sexual fiction blames gays and lesbians for the decline of "family values". Given that family is a special right reserved for heterosexuals, it is bizarre to blame gays and lesbians. It is also dubious to link such a decline to gays given the struggle of couples like Egan and Nesbitt for inclusion into, and the broadening of, the notion of family. In any event, **persecution is not a family value.**

Some 50% of heterosexual marriages end in divorce. Some 40% of married couples have

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extramarital affairs. Heterosexual unions are wrecked by spousal and child abuse, and by alcohol, drug and gambling addictions. This suggests many heterosexuals are incapable of maintaining marital commitments. Given this (lack of) standard, gays and lesbians could hardly do worse.

Gay sexuality is said to be "against nature". Those who believe this seek to legislate "naturally correct" sexuality. They confuse naturally correct with morally correct. The use of unnatural in this context usually means two things. Unnatural can mean artificial or simply "human made". Thus much of what humans do is unnatural. However, the charge of immorality is reserved for gays and lesbians.

The focus on selective ideas of natural ignores the unique poetic capacity of humans to re-create themselves socially and culturally. None of the rituals associated with courting or flirting, or even marriage, are natural.

As Karen Korchinski (Letters March 7, '96) wrote, even modern biblical interpretations of Sodom are selective.

McClung imported one interpretation of Christian theology into legal issues. Alberta is not a theocracy. Further, this view presents nature selectively. Even if human relations reflect patterns evident across nature, then homosexuality is defensible.

Studies by J.D. Weinrich found ambiguous and homosexual behavior in other mammals, fish, birds and insects. Similarly, R.M. Denniston found ambisexuality in animals. and, research on "intersexes" or hermaphrodites suggests such occurrences are quite "natural". It is, in fact, unnatural to force human sexual diversity into one compulsory mold.

It is fundamentally wrong to condone, by acts of omission or commission, discrimination against gays and lesbians. They are your daughters and sons, sisters and brothers, and even some of your wives and husbands.

Legalized sexual conformity is neither natural nor inherently moral. The law should uphold civil rights not mimic selective religious dogma.

PFLAG "Rep" Meets Human Rights Minister

A meeting was held on March 11, 1996, with Gary Mar, Minister responsible for Human Rights. I was privileged to be able to attend this meeting with Murray Billet (GALA "rep"), Delwin Vriend and Anne Erskine and to offer my support in the cause of human rights in Alberta. Mr. Mar's commitment is "to build a strong province with a high quality of life and fair opportunity for all Albertans". He stressed that only through education can we hope to "eliminate the attitudes that result in racism, sexism and intolerance". He also said an Education Officer had been appointed to work with the Human Rights Commission, however, we were not given a contact name. Obviously, the media was there in full force and I had made a commitment to make my television debut, so to speak. I was terrified - but more than ready to face the onslaught and the repercussions, if any, from my office the following day (no one outside of personal friends know I have a lesbian daughter). However they did not invite me to read the statement which I had prepared in advance - and I had even quit shaking in my boots! Everyone has the right to equal opportunities and

we need to have this legislation changed to include that, so we will keep on fighting with Murray, Anne and Delwin and it will indeed be a happy day for us and the community when these laws include justice for all.

I did invite Mr. Mar to one of our meetings and I left several copies of our PFLAG brochure as well as *Ten Simple Things You Can Do to Make a Difference*. I hope he has read them and passed them around the legislative assembly.

Lynne

(Way to go Lynne! PFLAG Edmonton is behind you all the way.)

AROUND THE WORLD



Gay Rights in South Africa

(Courtesy of *Perceptions*, March 13, '96)

Since South Africa adopted its post-apartheid interim constitution they have been ahead of Canada, and most of the world, in the protection of gay/lesbian rights. However the constitutional protections have been under attack from the African Christian Democratic Party as the constitution has approached final approval in May.

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A campaign to keep the protections in the constitution has been launched by the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality. Coalition spokesperson Karin Burger said, "Until the clause is in the final constitution, the gay and lesbian community must remain united and mobilized." They have initiated a letter-writing campaign to the Constitutional Assembly along with the printing of 25,000 postcards for the Assembly and declared "A National Day of Action" on January 27 when activists from all the provinces collected signatures on petitions along with other activities.

GLCC in MOSCOW

(Courtesy *Perceptions*, March 13, '96)

(Moscow) Six years after the crumbling of the iron-curtain, a gay/lesbian community centre opened in Moscow. It is already attempting to offer a large number of services. They have cultural programs and art exhibits, archives, a phone-line and provide social and medical support. The Centre will facilitate activists who want to engage in political lobbying and those who want to start a family/friends of gays and lesbians support group.

The Centre will also be staging a competition for the design of a monument dedicated to the memory of the gay victims of Communism. Spokesperson Roman Kalinin said, "From 1923 to 1993, the anti-sodome law was in force in the Soviet Union. Thousands of people were sent to gulags, many of them died and the lives of the rest were crippled. Considering ourselves part of the domoccratic movement, we find it

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necessary to remind about these victims and to honor their memory by creating a monument, which in our opinion, should be placed in the most known Moscow gay-cruising area, the square in front of the Bolshoi Theatre."

EVENTS CALENDAR

Alberta Summit '96

April 26 - 28, '96

Red Deer College

For information please call Corey Johnston at [REDACTED] or Just People chairperson Lee Wegenast at [REDACTED] Or write to Just People Equal Rights Society, P.O. Box 27038, Downtown Post Office, Red Deer, AB T4N 6JX8.

The conference is an opportunity for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and their supporters to gather and look at ways to network to better achieve the goal of equality. This year the guest speaker at the conference will be NDP MP, Svend Robinson.

"Meeting Men in the 90's"

Dating Strategies

April 17, 24 & May 1, 8/ '96

GMOC Seminar

Liatris Gardening Club

Saturday, May 4, 1996

6:00 pm

4707 - 106 St

Pot Luck & Plant Exchange

Bring your favorite culinary accomplishment and any extra house plants, bedding plants or

perennials in your garden that you wish to remove but can't bear to throw out. Come and share your "pot luck" and your plants or just your "pot luck". For info please call Pat at [REDACTED]



Sexuality in an Information Age

2nd Western Canadian Sexual Health Conference

May 8 - 10, 1996

University of Alberta

Lister Hall, Edmonton

This conference includes workshops on:

- Parents of Lesbians & Gays: Parent - "Child" Issues;
- Gay & Lesbian Youth: Making Our Agencies More Accessible;
- Coming Out and the Media;
- Transvestism in the 90's;
- Health Information: E-Mail, Internet, Edmonton FreeNet & Beyond;
- Condoms, Computers and Contraception: Innovation in Sexual Health Information

For further conference information:



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- Write:

Birth Control Centre
#200, 10036 Jasper Ave
Edmonton, AB
T5J 2W2

Footnote: The above conference is being organized thanks to ASPSH, The Alberta Society for the Promotion of Sexual Health. ASPSH strives to promote optimal sexual and reproductive health and well-being throughout the lifespan for all through:

- Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Services
- Public Education
- Advocacy of choice in sexual and reproductive health decisions
- Acquisition, utilization and distribution of information and resources
- Networking and Support

Who is invited to this conference?

Sexual Health Educators, Social workers, Clergy, Health Professionals, Corrections workers, Physicians, Teachers, General public, AIDS organizations....

EVM

Saturday, June 22, 1996

8:00 pm

Convocation Hall, U of A

"When we're free to love anyone we choose, when this world's big enough for all diff'rent views...we shall be free" - Garth Brooks

Join the Edmonton Vocal Minority Choir in a celebration of the triumph of FREEDOM!

WHY AM I GAY?

(52 min)

Three men and two women discuss why they are attracted to their own sex while doctors from the fields of Psychology, Psychiatry, Genetics and Microbiology discuss what homosexuality is and is not.

A mature look at present attitudes and prejudices alongside some of the latest research on the subject.

"JUST FOR FUN"

(23 min)

A well made docudrama around the causes and effects of "Gay-bashing".

How ignorance and prejudice can evolve into physical violence and rampage.

"GAY NINETIES"

(47 min)

Journalist Maria Shriver, 1993 TV program. This program is angled to see what it means to be gay or lesbian. Some of it may be unsettling, some of it moving. The gay community, in this recent history of the Gay Revolution from the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York, through the AIDS epidemic, through the political and social backlash up to the present status, is revealed as a rich and influential sector of society.

Shriver's probing interview throws new light on the Gay community.

THE GAY GENE

This Australian film reviews research into homosexuality in family histories and possible links to a "Gay gene".

Driving against this is the fundamentalist "Holy War on Gays" inciting homophobic attitudes in the ignorant and uninformed.

A wide range of sexual activities is covered in this instructive film and it pleads for wider understanding.

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER (56 min)

An Australian Broadcasting Corporation project.

What happens when a group of people with HIV sit down to dinner? What do they look like? What do they talk about?

Join ten people from all walks of life and see for yourself.

"BRAIN SEX" (Part 1 of 3)

(48 min) CBC Witness Series

Based on the paperback book of the same title the film demonstrates sex differences.

Through much recent research we see that our brains are "hard wired" for our sexual orientation from early days in the womb itself.

Some traditional ideas must give way to the latest scientific work. New information is presented which helps to explain homosexual behavior.

THE VIDEO - FILE

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

(30 min)

Coping with puberty and the teen years, gay youth face discrimination, isolation and homophobia.

Cut off from family and friends by fear, 10% of our kids are prey to depression and suicide.

By defining some gay lifestyles and common problems this film can move youth to reach out for help.

WHO'S AFRAID OF PROJECT 10?

(23 min)

Virginia Uribe runs a teen group in a Los Angeles area school.

This counselling service allows for exchange of ideas and experiences for Gay kids who have problems with family.

Many of these end up on the streets as prostitutes, fuelling the AIDS epidemic.

GAY & LESBIAN MARDI GRAS PARADE

Sydney, Australia (58min)

This edited version of a three hour event was seen by millions of TV viewers "Down Under", not to mention many thousands on the city sidewalks.

Any further description is superfluous - the "Parade" speaks for itself. (Viewer discretion is advised).

To borrow a video please contact Ernie at a meeting or phone: [REDACTED]

It's a Gay Life!

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HOMOSEXUALITY & OTHER CULTURES

By Lorne Warneke, M.D.

All primitive cultures do not consider homosexuality taboo. In fact, if anything, the opposite is true. Most primitive societies regarded homosexuality as something to be revered.

In ancient Greece, homosexuality was idealized and even promoted between older adult males and young adult males as a form of apprenticeship where the focus was not upon sexuality so much as it was upon skills and general learning that the older could impart to the younger person. Homosexuality was also accepted in ancient Rome and was also found and accepted amongst the Hebrews of the Old Testament although came to be condemned in the Judao-Christian tradition. Christ was silent on the subject (Crooks).

Amongst North American Indian Tribes, homosexuality was widely accepted and the role such individuals had in these societies is instructive.

Berdache is a term that was first used by Spanish and French explorers and applied to

androgynous members of American Indian Tribes



8.35. Diadoumenos: detail of head. National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens.

(Williams). The word originally was an Arabic and Persian term for the younger partner in a male homosexual relationship. Male Berdache were found in 150 North American societies and female Berdache were found in over 63 tribes

(Roscoe Williams). The Berdache were accepted and integrated members of their community. They were males and females who were androgynous, meaning they had male and female characteristics. Most of them were androgynous, meaning they had male and

female characteristics. Most of them were probably homosexual although some may have been transsexual and a few even heterosexual with strong opposite sex interests. In many cases they enjoyed special respect and honors. Occasionally they were feared because of alleged supernatural powers. The Berdache had a number of key functions in their society including:

- productive specialization such as crafts and domestic skills for males and hunting and leadership for females;
- supernatural sanction with healing and priestly powers;
- gender variation with distinct cross dressing for some and distinct dress for others;
- caring for the sick, the old and children.

The emphasis by the rest of the tribe was not on sexual behaviours but on economic attributes. Data exists that indicate that the Berdache often had partners who were same sex and therefore homosexual (Roscoe).

The Berdache of the Lakota Indians, also called Wintkes, were males who had strong

associations with femininity and spirituality, were regarded as sacred people, and played an important role in caring for the ill and elderly. The 'Nadle' (nadleehe) of the Navajo tribes were also homosexual males who were given great respect. As some elders of the Navajo tribes have said, "If there were no nadle the country would change. They are responsible for all the wealth in the country. If there were no more left, the horses, sheep and Navajo would go. They are leaders just like President Roosevelt". (Hill) Navajo families considered themselves fortunate if one of their children behaved androgynously and therefore might become a Nadle. Berdache have also been well described in Cheyenne, Mojave, Pueblo, Sioux, Crow and Tlingit tribes to name a few. Of interest, one of the roles that the Berdache filled was looking after children, particularly those who had lost their parents, a role in which they were very adept (Williams). As Roscoe, a cultural anthropologist states, "Again and again one finds Berdaches attributed with exceptional productivity, talent and originality".

In other societies, homosexuals were and still are very accepted, in many ways fulfilling similar roles to the Berdache (Herdt). In Hawaii, androgynous persons are called Mahu, in Samoa 'fa afafine', in India Hijras (Besnier, Nanda). Homosexual behavior in Melanesia was and still is a ritualized part of the rite of passage to manhood for young



males. Every young male engages in homosexual behavior with an older male for a period of time, and although homosexual males do exist, they are no more common than elsewhere in spite of the homosexual experiences every boy has in adolescence (Herdt).

As Callender and Kuchems, cultural anthropologists state, the next step in Berdache studies will be the recognition that gender diversity is not an isolated feature of North American Indian Societies but is a worldwide phenomenon represented in most cultures as well as in certain historical periods of all Western Societies. Our society could learn from all of this, recognizing that individuals with a homosexual orientation have special talents and interests that should be

It's a Gay Life!

encouraged and not suppressed, for the benefit of all (Warneke).

There is ample evidence in Western society that homosexual males and females are more than adequate parents, and there is no evidence of negative or adverse effects upon the children they raise (Bigner, Bozelt)

The following related (?) article comes to us from PFLAG Calgary:

A PFLAG'er holidaying in New Zealand recently visited a bird sanctuary there. While the tour group was admiring some Emperor Penguins, the guide explained that mother penguins feed their young by regurgitating partly-digested fish directly into their infants' gullets.

One woman in the group asked, "Where does the mother get the fish?"

The guide told her the mothers have to "hunt" for it in the ocean.

The same woman then asked, "What happens to the chicks if a mother is killed by a predator?"

The guide answered, "Then they're raised by a MALE couple who have bonded."

An Outdoor & Recreation Group for Edmonton's Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and their friends



Activities Phone Line:

634-4747



OUT&Out